
FUTURE ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES TASK FORCE MEETING

MINUTES

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Appointed Task Force: Karen Lynch, Chair, and Denise Arsenault

Task Force Members: Karen Binder, Cheryl Burns, Joseph Ciullo, Randy Cloutier, Cara Cromwell, Rebecca Fikiet, Edward Mara, Ken Marshall, Susan Rancourt, Melinda Thies and Diane Williamson

Karen Lynch called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Public Comment

Joe Ciullo asked what the District's stand was on President Barack Obama's speech to students today. Ed Mara said it was voluntary. Many classrooms did not have access but it was available for all students wishing to view it. At the high school a screen was set up in the auditorium and about four classes of students viewed the

presentation and Ed joined them; the students applauded at the end and wondered what all the controversy was about. Karen Lynch said she received, as a parent, a ConnectEd message that if you do not want your child to view the speech, just send a note in to the teacher.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Denise Arsenault motioned to approve the minutes to the July 28, 2009 Meeting; Karen Lynch seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Introductions

Karen reported that John Bento is not present because he is on a well-deserved vacation with his family. Ken Marshall was introduced.

Karen Lynch distributed copies of a number of plans that were studied in 2002 and 2003, including additions to Byfield and a new school on Naomi Street, as points of reference.

Also distributed was a report on the current elementary enrollment by classroom. Ed Mara explained that the one multi-level classroom at Hugh Cole consists of high level first graders and lower level second graders; the classroom will remain next year but probably as a 2 / 3 multi-level. The Hugh Cole numbers are up 27 to 30 students from last year. District wide comparisons to past years can be found in the

NESDEC report.

The Task Force discussed the NESDEC report and the new enrollment/ classroom numbers. Ed explained NESDEC's projection that if all the land in Bristol and Warren with the potential for development were developed, our population could increase significantly; however, we have had a decrease in enrollment over the past ten years. NESDEC reported that over 50% of our population is over age 55 and many are waiting for an upswing in the economy to sell their homes, which would most likely be bought by young families; this trend is already evident and is not unprecedented.

Hugh Cole has room for growth of a full track; Bristol is very limited with only art and music rooms that could be used for classrooms; approximately 100 new students could be accommodated District-wide over the next five years. However, reducing art and music to the use of carts would greatly diminish the quality of those classes as well as the overall quality of education that we developed to such a high level; this is doable in an emergency situation but is not a long term fix. For the benefit of the new members, Ed reminded the group that space-wise, the District lost a whole track of classroom space when we closed Reynolds and Byfield and reopened Colt Andrews; we had to open an extra K classroom at Rockwell.

Assignment of New Members to Course of Action (COA) Subgroups

Ken Marshall opted for COA #4: Open a Charter / Lab School, and later joined COA #2: Build a New School, as well.

At approximately 6:50 PM Karen Lynch suspended the meeting for the subgroups to meet individually.

At 7:50 PM the meeting reconvened. Diane Williamson left the meeting.

COA Subgroup Updates

COA #1: Maximizing Current School Space (John Bento, Leader,(absent), Rebecca Fikiet, Susan Rancourt and Cheryl Burns (absent))

Susan Rancourt reported for the group saying an entire track of students can be placed at Hugh Cole. Carrots to entice Bristol families could be: a science/technology magnet school, a gifted and talented program or a comprehensive study of culture program. Ed and Melinda said a culture program would provide languages (say Arabic or Chinese) to students at an early age and could be expanded to middle then high school levels; expanding our languages is actually a goal in our new Strategic Plan.

An expansion of the extended day program is also being explored for

this purpose. The District has a connection with Bryant University's Chinese program, which teaches not only the language, but the culture as well, and Bryant wants to share this with the schools. Karen Lynch said this could be started at Hugh Cole for all District students. Ed said Smithfield has opened a Confucius classroom this year that offers total emersion in Chinese; Melinda feels they would modify the program for us if necessary. Karen Lynch questioned whether it would attract as many students as a science/ technology school; a survey could be put together to gauge parent preferences.

Joe Ciullo, as a former math educator, in looking at the District scores, sees a much greater need in the science and math field and he believes colleges are missing the boat by not requiring specialized certification at the K through grade 3 levels. Melinda said that in math Bristol Warren performs high at the elementary level, middle school scores level out, and scores decline on the high school level; our District has been able to supply additional supports to our educators with math specialists; we are also implementing a K, 1, 2 intervention program. Melinda would support a math/ science program that could start small, maybe in extended day. Ken Marshall asked if an extended year program is a possibility, offering students an early out; Melinda said it is all based on the economy and Ed explained we do have a dual enrollment option for students allowing them to earn college credits in high school.

This COA Subgroup will explore these possibilities further.

Karen Binder left the meeting at 8:10 PM.

COA #2: Build an Additional School (Cara Cromwell, Leader, John Bento (absent) and Ken Marshall)

Cara Cromwell said the assumption is the building would have to be in Bristol and hold two tracks of students, which requires a 10 acre area; the parcel of land between Bristol and Warren that John Saviano had previously mentioned (Perry's Farm), has serious wetland issues, as does Haffenreffer and Kane's Way.

COA #3: Use Empty Buildings (Denise Arsenault, Leader, David Barboza (absent), Karen Binder, Joe Ciullo, Melissa Labonte (absent), Diane Mederos (absent), John Saviano (absent) and Diane Williamson)

Denise Arsenault reported the group intends to explore the St. Elizabeth, Byfield and Reynolds Schools. Byfield would require an addition off the back and ventilation of the third floor. Ed had previously inquired about St. Elizabeth School and it was not for sale; the building would have to be brought up to code for it to be leased. Cara asked if students could be tuitioned out to other Districts. Ed said this has never been done. Denise stated that John Saviano's suggestion of an addition onto Guiteras is not possible considering DEM. The Byfield building could never be sold by the Town because

it sits on the Common and is restricted by the grand deed of the Town, which can be changed only by a referendum—highly unlikely.

Rebecca Fikiet left the meeting at 8:27 PM.

COA #4: Open a Charter / Lab School (Ed Mara, Leader, Jennifer Berry (absent), Ken Marshall, Kristen Quinn (absent) and Paul Silva (absent))

Ed Mara said the District has been involved in the exploration of a lab school in conjunction with Roger Williams University, but the concept is now on hold for financial reasons. Another entity has introduced an idea for a middle school level math, science, technology charter school; this would require approval by the State; the idea is for a regional school serving the whole East Bay and students' tuition to attend would be paid by their school district. Ed, Melinda, Ken Marshall and Paul Silva have met with the gentleman and RWU. The preferred concept is the K - 5 lab school which would help ease our space problems; it would be a partnership with the University and the District would provide some services, such as custodial support. Teachers in the lab school would be RWU students, directed by RWU staff, who are certified. Ed sees this as a win/ win situation; he and Ken Marshall will attempt to reopen communication with Roger Williams and get the idea back on track.

Karen Lynch asked if any members needed any more information;

there were no requests. All information on the previous facility studies is accessible in the Superintendent's Office.

Feasibility of January 2010 Timeline

This being a self-imposed deadline is negotiable; it is too early to predict.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 6:00 PM in the Oliver Administration Building

Adjournment

MOTION: At 8:42 PM, Denise Arsenault, seconded by Karen Lynch, motioned to adjourn; the motion passed unanimously.

/ca